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STATE FOR EUR/WE AND H
H PLEASE PASS TO SPEAKER PELOSI

¶1. (U) Summary: We are pleased to provide some background on US relations with the Holy See. This unique relationship between two global powers with worldwide interests and influence turned 25 in January 2009, and helps advance our shared goals of human dignity every day. Among the issues on which we collaborate every day with the Holy See are human rights - commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 2008; terrorism - building on the Pope's insistence that religion cannot be used as a pretext for violence; trafficking in persons; religious freedom; development and aid; and more. We are hoping to expand this cooperation to the field of protection of the environment, and hope that your visit will assist us in this regard. We thank you for your availability to meet with Holy See and Church officials. End summary

A VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

¶2. (U) Millions of people around the world regard the Holy See as a voice of conscience for humanity, calling upon the world to meet its highest ideals and aspirations. In its interactions with the faithful and with nations, the Holy See seeks to remind the world that politics is about human beings and their economic, social, and spiritual welfare. The Vatican's major foreign policy focus is religious freedom and its social focus is the centrality of the human person in all governmental decision-making. More specifically, the Vatican works for the defense of human life and values, freedom of religion, the promotion and defense of peace, an international order of justice, and support for democracy.

GLOBAL REACH

¶3. (U) The Vatican is unique in the world in its ability to pursue its agenda. It hosts the second largest diplomatic representation in the world (only the United States hosts more embassies) and has full diplomatic relations with 177 countries. Seventy-seven countries have embassies to the Holy See in Rome, as do four multilateral organizations - including the United Nations and European Union. With a grassroots presence in churches in virtually every country in the world, and supported by over 450,000 priests, 750,000 women religious (nuns) and 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide, the Holy See is also an extraordinary "listening post." Nunciatures, local bishops' conferences, religious orders and missionaries, local parishes and churches give the Holy See unique insights on global

developments. Its representatives are frequently able to pass delicate messages to host governments and to ascertain the on-the-ground situation where others cannot.

14. (U) The Catholic Church is often among the first responders to global crises, and one of the most dedicated organizations in providing services where there are chronic needs. Catholic charities and affiliated NGOs operate worldwide and have a tremendous impact. For example, the UN estimates that 27 percent of all care of AIDS patients worldwide is provided by the Church and affiliated organizations. The Caritas federation (which includes Catholic Relief Services and others) is one of the world's largest humanitarian agencies; it reaches over 24 million people a year with its programs.

15. (U) Moreover, the Holy See is able to expand its message via an impressive media organization, internet outreach, and journalistic contacts. Vatican Radio reaches every country in the world and Vatican publications are circulated worldwide in numerous languages. Vatican websites register tens of thousands of hits each day. The resulting international coverage gives U.S. policy-makers a unique platform to reach a global audience via outreach at the Holy See. In addition, hundreds of international journalists are accredited to the Holy See, including representatives of CNN, the Associated Press, Reuters, the BBC, and most major American networks, newspapers and journals.

UNIQUE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

16. (U) The U.S. and the Vatican maintain an ongoing dialogue on human dignity and freedom, rooted in the respect we both have for the rights of individuals. One of the most important issues on our shared agenda is strengthening the global moral consensus against terrorism. The Vatican has been a strong and consistent voice against terror and against the use of religion to justify

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such acts. The Vatican's inter-religious dialogue with Islamic and other religious leaders seeks to find commonalities between faiths to combat hatred.

17. (U) The U.S. and the Holy See have also developed a special partnership to combat trafficking in persons (TIP), or modern-day slavery. This is a global problem that affects up to 700,000 victims annually. The Holy See's focus is on prevention and protection of victims. The U.S. Embassy to the Holy See has hosted five international conferences over the past six years, bringing together experts to provide training for members of religious orders to combat TIP. To date, we have trained over 400 nuns from four continents, and helped establish several grass-roots networks to fight TIP.

18. (SBU) Another issue of great shared interest between the U.S. and Holy See is religious freedom. We meet regularly with Holy See officials to discuss and implement strategies for countries of concern, such as China, Russia, Vietnam, and some Islamic states. Moreover, we collaborate with the Holy See on discussion of these issues in the UN and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

19. (U) On the development and aid front, the U.S. and Holy See have collaborated on expanding understanding of biotech foods and building support for biotech use, and on a range of HIV/AIDS prevention and care issues. We are also ratcheting up our dialogue on combating climate change and promoting environmentally sustainable economic growth, issues that are of particular concern to Pope Benedict.

10. (U) And, of course, the United States and the Holy See have worked and continue to work together to resolve global conflicts in places like the Middle East, Sudan (Darfur), the Great Lakes Region of Africa, the Balkans, Latin America and East Timor.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

¶11. (U) The Holy See is concerned about climate change and supports actions to mitigate it without delay, even if the problem is difficult to quantify scientifically. The Vatican has taken steps to reduce its own carbon footprint, such as installing the solar panels on the papal audience hall that your staff members saw on a recent visit to Rome. More broadly, the Pope has said that nature, or creation, is a gift from God. The Holy See does not agree with environmental approaches that place human beings on the same level as nature itself, but believes human beings have a responsibility to care for the environment, avoiding materialistic and consumerist lifestyles that harm it.

¶12. (U) As far as governments' responsibility to care for the environment and implement policies that prevent pollution. The Holy See believes strongly that these should be linked to each country's level of economic and technological development. Thus, the Vatican also supports the view that richer countries have a responsibility to transfer environmental technologies and assist poor countries in other ways to achieve sustainable levels of development.

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